

and that, too, generally upon mere *ex parte* testimony.

The report now under consideration provides that hereafter, the legislature of this State should have no control over this subject, but that the courts should exercise exclusive jurisdiction, in all such cases. If these two propositions be acceded to by the Convention, and, in his opinion, they doubtless would be, we get rid at once of over one-third of the entire legislation of the State.

To pursue this subject a step farther, he would remark that out of the vast number of laws passed here at the last session, and to which so much importance is attached, thirteen only were of a general character.

Now, Mr. President, is not this a most startling fact, and does it not demonstrate beyond question, the utter folly of burthening the people of this State, with the great expense incident upon annual sessions of the General Assembly.

Mr. P. said he had regarded the subject of biennial sessions, as an adjudicated question—as a proposition solemnly settled by the people themselves. He believed it was so regarded throughout Maryland, during the canvass of last year. The people throughout the State were called upon at the ballot-box, in 1846, to decide for themselves, the question now under debate. The provisions of the biennial law, were published in every county in Maryland, and its various sections entered largely into the canvass before the people of that fall; and in order to ascertain, beyond question, the sense of the people upon this subject, every voter, when at the polls, was called upon solemnly to record his individual vote for or against this constitutional change. The result is well known. Out of about fifty-five thousand votes polled, near five thousand majority were declared in favor of biennial sessions of the Legislature. Has this Convention any evidence of change of opinion upon the subject? None whatever. Not a petition in the opposition has found its way into these halls. Not a newspaper throughout Maryland, has dared to advocate a return to annual sessions; and gentlemen upon this floor, who are most earnest and violent in their opposition to this amendment, have been forced to admit that no complaint against the measure exists, even among their own constituency.

Fourteen States of this Union have adopted biennial sessions, and among that number are the States of Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee and Louisiana. Ohio, the third State of the Union in point of population, and he believed in wealth, also has adopted this measure, and Louisiana, with the populous and commercial city of New Orleans as her emporium, has also done so. In fact, almost all the Southern Democratic States, have incorporated this provision upon their organic law. He mentioned this fact to show this House, that this amendment did not stand obnoxious to the charge of being exclusively a whig measure.

In no instance had this provision been adopted elsewhere, and after trial abandoned. This

principle is contrary to the progressive spirit of the age. Maryland alone, should this principle be departed from by this Convention, will stand in the unenviable attitude of what is vulgarly called "taking the back track."

Mr. P. said, he would proceed to consider this amendment, as a retrenchment measure—as a proposition calculated to save to the people of Maryland, thirty thousand dollars annually, for all time to come. It would save the interest of half a million of the public debt. He would ask gentlemen what was the most potent argument used throughout the State, in favor of calling this Convention? He would answer, apart from the city of Baltimore, where increased representation was the all prevailing argument, that retrenchment of the public expenditures, was the watchword every where. Low salaries and the reduction of the number of officers, was the constant cry of the reform party, in all the counties—in every section of the State. Retrenchment and reform was emblazoned upon every banner. These were the watchwords of the party, and they ran *pari passu* every where. It was well known here and elsewhere, that he had opposed this Convention, and he felt now constrained to declare that what he had witnessed in these halls, had but strengthened his conviction of the correctness of his own judgment.

But, Mr. President, as the people have determined this Convention should be called, and that they would have a new government, no man on this floor was more anxious and more sincerely desirous than himself to make a good Constitution, and one which would be well received throughout the State. But to return. What are the evidences upon this floor that public expectation will be gratified with regard to these propositions? What salaried officers are now proposed to be abolished? Ah! Mr. President, where is even the salary of one officer proposed to be reduced? Nowhere—not one. Not one, sir. The converse of this proposition is too true. The necessity and even expediency of returning to annual sessions of the Legislature at an increase of expense of thirty thousand dollars annually is now strongly urged upon this floor. Gentlemen who would become indignant at being called anti-reformers oppose this amendment. Where, he would again ask, are the evidences within these Halls of a determination to retrench in any manner the public expenditures? He could but repeat this most important inquiry.

Do the reports from standing committees now before us foreshadow the result? He could but again answer no, sir, no. But a few years since it was most eloquently urged upon this floor and elsewhere, that the salary of two thousand a year was ample for a plain republican Governor. What say gentlemen now upon this subject? The Chairman of the Executive Committee, the distinguished gentleman from Queen Annes, (ex-Governor Grason,) has given the answer. The report of that committee proposes to fix the compensation of the Governor at four thousand dollars a year, just double the amount fixed upon during the prevalence of this reform fever. The distinguished gentleman from Cecil, (Mr. Mc-